

## Psychosocial factors and environmental design / Living with dementia and quality of life

## Cohousing for people living with dementia: The Modena experience

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Social isolation, caregiving burden and costs, loss of quality of life related to increasing disability, loss of agency and personhood, are some of the main unmet needs for people with dementia (PwD) and their caregivers. **Objective:** In order to support people with dementia and their caregivers we implemented a cohousing model. 5 PwD were encouraged to live together. Caregivers were supported in the care according to person centred approach.

**Method:** Participation in the project (supported by Modena City Council and local Alzheimer association, had been on a voluntary basis. The only exclusion criteria for PwD had been bedridden. Each PwD has his own bedroom with personal belongings and furniture, while the dining and living room are furnished according to prosthetic environment principles. Caregivers turn up in order to both maintain familial environment and reduce global care burden, while formal caregivers, provided by social service and employed by relatives, contribute to PwD care. According to carers expressed needs, voluntaries and an occupational therapist have been engaged to weekly involve PwD in leisure activities and psychosocial intervention. A granted psychologist is available to support Caregivers. A cost analysis, PwD and caregiver quality of life evaluation and caregiving burden were checked. Two control groups of PwD living at home with relatives or family assistant were considered in order to evaluate this cohousing model effectiveness. The first control group was supported by local dementia association. PwD were followed by a memory clinic in cohousing group and in both control groups.

**Result:** A significant cost reduction was found in cohousing group (1879 €/month vs 2502€/month and 2662€/month in control groups). Moreover caregiving burden reduction and an improved PwD and caregivers quality of life were found in cohousing group.

**Conclusion:** This is the first cohousing experience for PwD, in our Country. Relatives improved caregiving experience, reduced financial burden, isolation and time spent for assistance. PwD reduced the risk of institutionalization and improved their quality of life. According to this study results another cohousing experience was open 6 months ago by our community social services.